

# Managing the Market: Unpredictable wildfire suppression needs in a changing climate



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# US wildfire

- Wild land fires increasing in frequency and extent
- Annual federal firefighting costs average \$1.5 billion
- In 2015:
  - USFS spent over 50% of entire agency budget on fire
  - Over 9.7 million acres burned
- USFS expects severe fires to double by 2050

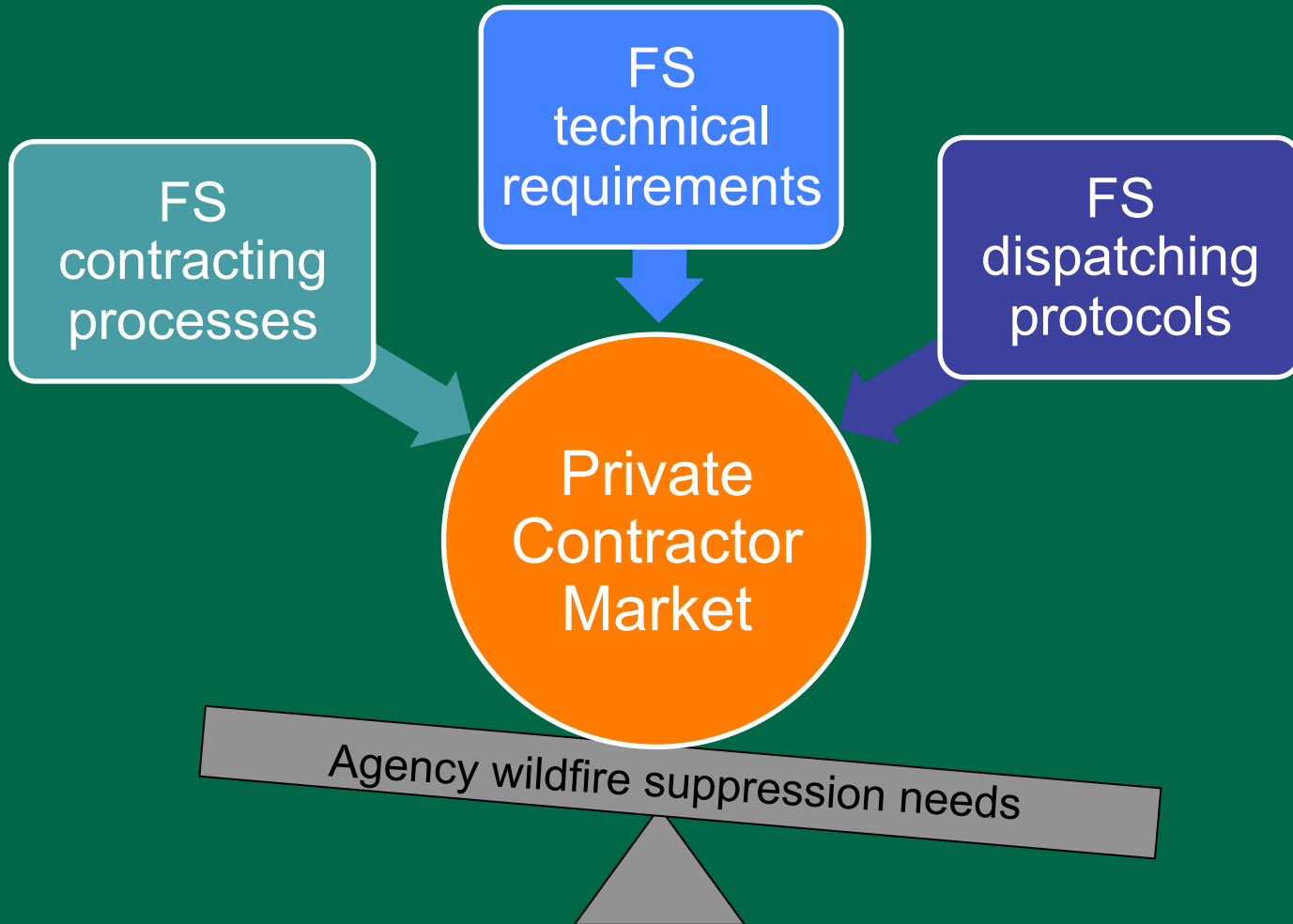


# USFS fire response and management



- Federal capacity to manage fires depends on local cooperators and private contractors
- Fire suppression contractors depend on needs of agencies for fire suppression work

# USFS' wildfire suppression needs drive private contracting:





# Research focus

- USFS market management
  - Preseason contracting
  - Dispatch and incident management
- Private contractor business models
  - Hand crew contractors
  - Fire resource preseason contract holders
- Methods: Interviews, participant observation, document review, meetings



# Fire suppression contractors in the western US

- **Hand crews: 48 businesses**
  - 9 national contracts
  - 44 Interagency Firefighting Crew Agreements
- **Preseason contract holders: 2,050**
  - 9,350 resource agreements





# “Call when needed”

- Originally done by those already working in the forest as a secondary focus
- Evolved into a professionalized and standardized system



# Unpredictable demand

- Fire need subject to type, timing, location and intensity of each wildfire
- Contracting in an unpredictable environment requires multiple strategies





# Contractor response

1. Buffering from unpredictable demand by diversifying services
2. Relying on relationships to access opportunities and maintain support
3. Increasing collaboration and communication to facilitate support and learning



# Initial thoughts

- Agencies will increasingly depend on call when needed resources
- The stability and effectiveness of these resources hinges on:
  - private contractors' business models
  - agency contracting decisions and related policy





# Thank you!

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